

Shoe-in Practices for Successful Chapters

Jensi P. Souders, Ed.D., International First Vice-President and Helen Popovich, Ph.D., International Member-at-Large conducted a survey in which more than 1200 chapters took part. The results of that survey identified practices common in successful chapters. While there are no “cookie cutter” rules for creating a vibrant, enthusiastic and growing chapter, there are practices that are repeated again and again by successful chapters.

Such practices include the following:

- Holds 4-6 well-planned, relatively informal but still structured, quick-moving business meetings per year
- Meets at varied times, days, and places convenient for working members
- Meets for approximately 1 ½ hours in length, excluding meals
- Has more refreshment-only meetings than meetings with meals
- Plans fellowship time as part of each meeting
- Focuses on meeting members’ social needs (fellowship/camaraderie)
- Has open meetings and activities that welcome non-members
- Has a wide variety of high-quality, interesting programs and speakers, including programs that highlight community initiatives and those that use members’ talents/expertise
- Supports a variety of one-time and ongoing projects that actively engage members
- Supports projects in the areas of mentoring/Collaborative Connections; fund-raising and volunteer efforts; scholarships and grants-in aid; community initiatives, especially for women and children; literacy; the legislative process; and others, including international projects
- Communicates with members in multiple ways: newsletter (print, website or email 4+ times a year), phone, email, snail mail, website
- Publicizes the Society through projects and activities that receive newspaper coverage as well as school and community recognition
- Has specific strategies in place for attracting new members, retaining members, engaging retired and employed members, and developing/nurturing new chapter leaders
- Implements formal and traditional initiation and installation ceremonies
- Emphasizes the Society’s mission, purposes, and history
- Offers benefits and services that members cannot get elsewhere, including chapter scholarships, grants, interaction among a diverse group of educators, friendship/camaraderie, and service to community

How well does your chapter fit into these descriptions?